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ABSTRACT

The study reported in this paper responds to the current movement toward literature-based reading instruction. Five fifth-graders attending a Midwest, urban school participated in the 10-week study in a classroom in which the teacher initiated a literature-based reading program. Data sets included observational field notes, audiotaped lessons, interviews, and student-generated materials. Ongoing analysis revealed that when the teacher emphasized student pursuit of topics interesting to them, student written and oral texts explored varied and recurrent themes. In contrast, when the teacher emphasized reading skills and strategies, student responses remained text-based and remarkably similar. Findings imply that teachers balance their purposes and goals because of the effects on how children respond to texts. Focus on aesthetic responses may not promote necessary skills and strategies. At the same time, focus on efferent responses seems to stifle interaction and the development of ideas. (One hundred fourteen references and an appendix containing an explanation of transcript notations are attached.) (Author/SR)

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BOOK CLUB: STUDYING THE WRITTEN AND ORAL TEXTS OF ELEMENTARY CHILDREN PARTICIPATING IN A LITERATURE-BASED READING PROGRAM

Susan I. McMahon

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Abstract

This study responds to the current movement toward literature-based reading instruction. Five fifth-graders attending a Midwest, urban school participated in the ten-week study in a classroom in which the teacher initiated a literature-based reading program. Data sets included observational field notes, audiotaped lessons, interviews, and student-generated materials. Ongoing analysis revealed that when the teacher emphasized student pursuit of topics interesting to them, student written and oral texts explored varied and recurrent themes. In contrast, when the teacher emphasized reading skills and strategies, student responses remained text-based and remarkably similar. Findings from this study imply that we balance our purposes and goals because of the effects on how children respond to texts. Focus on aesthetic responses may not promote necessary skills and strategies. At the same time, focus on efferent responses seems to stifle interaction and the development of ideas.

BOOK CLUB: STUDYING THE WRITTEN AND ORAL TEXTS OF ELEMENTARY CHILDREN PARTICIPATING IN A LITERATURE-BASED READING PROGRAM

Susan I. McMahon[1]

Literature-Based Reading Instruction: More Than Just a Change in Materials Read

Recently, educators have called for a change from the current skills-based approach to teaching reading to a literature-based one (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985; Cullinan, 1987). Such reform includes more than merely a transfer from the use of basal readers and their accompanying workbooks to the use of children's literature. Advocates for modifications in current reading instruction also support changes in the instructional context that would alter significantly teaching and learning in elementary classrooms. These reforms include (a) the types of learning emphasized, (b) the representations that both promote and assess learning, (c) the interactional patterns encouraged in the classroom, and (d) the role of the teacher in children's learning.

The Types of Learning Stressed

Teachers reveal in many ways the types of learning stressed. Among those of fundamental importance are (a) the texts students read and (b) the content of the activities surrounding reading.

Most students in the United States currently learn to read through instruction that relies heavily on the selections and accompanying materials in basal reading series (Chall & Squire, 1991). Because these texts were written specifically to provide experiences for reading instruction, they often lack an interesting story structure children can easily follow (Goodman, Shannon, Freeman, & Murphy, 1988). In contrast, children's literature is generally written to convey meaning through a story line with interesting plots fashioned around established story structures. Advocates for change argue that such selections make reading more interesting,

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encourage students to choose to read, and therefore, promote better readers (Cullinan, 1987; Huck, 1990).

In addition to the selections students read, critics of current reading instruction find fault with the content of the activities associated with basals, arguing that they stress a type of learning that misrepresents the very nature of reading. Currently, instruction as reflected in most basal series emphasizes the acquisition of skills through the completion of individual worksheets (Anderson et al., 1985; Goodman et al., 1988). Advocates for change argue that reading is more than the mastery of a series of component skills; rather, it is a process based in meaning making (Langer, 1989). Thus, it is critical that reading instruction have this meaning-making process as its primary focus, with instruction on relevant strategies and skills embedded within and subordinate to the creation of meaning.

The Representations Used to Assess Learning

A second aspect of concern among proponents for change in reading instruction is which representations teachers accept as indicators of student learning. Currently, the basal series' worksheets and tests, measuring the acquisition of specific, isolated skills and strategies, constitute primary evidence of successful reading (Anderson et al., 1985; Goodman et al., 1988). Questions that follow or relate to specific selections usually focus on comprehension but frequently ask for a single, "correct" answer based on information within the text, leaving learners to assume that text interpretation is a narrow, fact-finding process.

Research into reader response calls into question these notions of one best answer, identifying aspects of both text- and reader-based influences on the construction of meaning (Beach, 1985; Cullinan, Harwood, & Galda, 1983; Galda, 1983; Golden & Guthrie, 1986; Ortony, 1985; Purves, 1973, 1985: Rosenblatt, 1976, 1985). Further, Beach (1972) found that written and oral responses frequently differed; therefore, how a reader is asked to represent her ideas about text might influence the response communicated. In addition, Hickman (1983) found that younger children relied more on acting out an understood meaning than they did on verbal explanation. Some (Cianciolo, 1988; Huck, Hepler, & Hickman, 1987)

have suggested that literature teachers provide multiple activities in which students can express and clarify their understanding of and response to literature. In fact, recent research investigating alternative methods has concluded that ability to elaborate story ideas is facilitated by using multiple representations (e.g., Pellegrini & Galda, 1988; Saul, 1989; Tierney & Edmiston, 1991).

What is essential to note is that the reader brings prior knowledge and experiences to the act of reading that shape meaning making. Traditional skills-based approaches to reading instruction frequently minimize this in favor of the text and the skills associated with successful reading. Changing to a literature-based approach requires attention to the reader and what she brings to the act of reading. Therefore, advocates for change argue that traditional worksheets and tests do not provide sufficient evidence of learning because they ignore both the social aspects of reading and an individual's process of interpretation and sense making. Since each reader constructs meaning based on her own prior knowledge and experiences, multiple interpretations may be gained from and relevant to a single text. Worksheets or tests designed for the generic learner ignore what the child brings to the act of reading, as well as the context in which this occurs. By seeking one best answer, such assessments emphasize an inappropriate, narrow focus on what constitutes learning and how one defines learning from text. Therefore, to recognize the students' roles in constructing meaning, learners should have multiple means of demonstrating the broader range of what they have gained from reading a selection.

The Interactional Pattern

A third criticism made by advocates for change in reading instruction is the common classroom interactional pattern of teacher-initiated question, student response, and teacher evaluation found in most classrooms (Cazden, 1988; Edwards & Mercer, 1987; Tharpe & Gallimore, 1988). Short (1990) argues this pattern leads to two problems: (a) students believe that reading is basically an act leading to a goal of one right answer and (b) such a stance promotes competition among students as they endeavor to find the answer the teacher wants and

bid for a chance to show their knowledge. Individual student interests and interpretations, as well as opportunities to build upon one another's ideas and interpretations, are sacrificed for a "correct" answer. Students look to the teacher as the source for and judge of answers, and they ignore what knowledge they might gain from their peers.

Since there are many ways to encourage response and deepen understanding (e.g., Benton, 1983; Hickman, 1981; Pappas & Brown, 1987; Strickland, Dillon, Finkhauser, Glick, & Rogers, 1989), reformers argue that teachers provide students more latitude in the questions they pursue as a part of reading. Instead of the questions found listed in a basal text, they argue for (a) teacher-constructed questions that recognize and promote individual student interests and (b) student-constructed questions based on their purposes and interests (Applebee & Langer, 1983; Bruner, 1978; Langer, 1986).

In addition to teacher questions, proponents for change note that students learn from one another as well as the teacher, so a reading program should provide opportunities for children to select topics for total class discussions and to interact with one another (Short, 1990; Smith, 1986). Such reform requires significant alterations in the instructional context. Instead of homogeneously-grouped students interacting solely with the teacher, change would include (a) heterogeneous groups, (b) student opportunities to contribute ideas about the direction and content of discussions, and (c) a variety of occasions for students to interact, including whole-group, small-group, paired, and individual activities.

Existing research provides evidence of the effectiveness and limitations of using student groups (Cazden, 1988; Dyson, 1987; Forman & Cazden, 1989; Johnson & Johnson, 1990; Johnson, Johnson, & Stanne, 1985; Lindow, Wilkinson, & Peterson, 1985; Peterson, Wilkinson, Spinelli, & Swing, 1984; Sharan, Bejarano, Kussell, & Peleg, 1984; Slavin, 1980, 1987, 1989; Webb, 1982; Webb & Cullian, 1983; Webb & Kenderski, 1984) but does not provide information about teacher-directed but student-led heterogeneous groups responding to literature.

The Role of the Teacher

Finally, such reforms require the role of the teacher to change as well because she currently determines the texts her students read, the content and focus of the activities in which they engage, and the content and structure of their interactions. Currently, the classroom teacher's role is to implement the basal program. If she abandons the basal, she must construct a reading program from scratch, selecting the texts, planning the content and focus of the activities, modifying the interactional patterns, and constructing new assessment procedures for measuring learning. Further, advocates for change contend that teachers should provide learners with more input into what and how they will learn.

As we consider proposals to change the nature of reading programs, it becomes increasingly apparent that such reform is much more complicated than merely replacing the basal series with children's literature. These calls for reform suggest significant modifications to four major components of the instructional context: (a) what children learn, (b) how they demonstrate this learning, (c) how they interact as they learn, and (d) what the teacher does to foster literacy growth. Clearly, this is a fundamental transformation in how teachers and children define reading. Despite the logic of many such arguments for reform, many questions about how to implement such a reorganization remain and require investigation.

The Book Club Study: An Investigation of Literature-Based Reading Instruction

The study described in the following report was initiated in response to calls for changes in reading instruction. While numerous stories of successful change exist as teachers adopt literature-based reading programs (e.g., Cullinan, in press; Hansen, 1986; Short, 1990), little is known about how such evolutions occurred; that is, as fundamental change is implemented in the teacher's role and the instructional context, we know little about how students adjust to new roles, responsibilities, and definitions of reading; how students' adjustment is affected by the instructional context; or what implications we see in students' response to text.

Five fifth-grade students, participating in a literature-based reading program reflecting modifications in the instructional context, are the focus of this study. Specifically, the teacher altered the reading program by changing both the materials students read and the methods she used to teach reading. The materials consisted of trade books, recognized by those familiar with children's literature as well-written texts conveying plots and characterization that arouse student response. The instructional methods included (a) learning to read in multiple ways, such as paired reading, reading silently, and reading aloud; (b) using multiple ways of representing ideas stimulated by the reading experience; (c) encouraging interactions in both whole-class and student-led small group discussions; and (d) teaching that modeled a variety of responses, the process of response to text, and the multiple skills and strategies associated with effective reading.

Views of Reading That Established Skills-Based Instruction: A Review of Relevant Literature

The roots of the dominant skills-based approach to reading instruction can be traced both to behavioral theories of learning and to early cognitive models of reading that focused on decoding and word identification (Venesky, 1984). Early models of reading focused on those aspects of the reading process that were more easily observed, such as word identification (Gough, 1972; LaBerge & Samuels, 1974). While later models recognized the importance of prior knowledge on comprehension and the interactive nature of reading (Just & Carpenter, 1980; Rumelhart, 1977), they did not delineate the mental strategies readers use to access or make use of prior knowledge. All of these models of reading attempted to explain how readers made sense of text by dividing the process into discrete skills.

More recently such models have come under attack because they ignore the more complex aspects of reading: (a) comprehension and the role of prior knowledge and experience, (b) reading as a social process, and (c) the relationship between reading and writing. Despite current criticism regarding the limited role word identification plays in reading comprehension, such designs have highly influenced methods of teaching reading because

teachers, curriculum developers, and the popular basal reading programs, responded to such views, incorporating word identification and decoding as skill acquisition essential for successful reading. Because basals are the primary source of not only materials but also methods teachers use to teach reading; because basal series have been slow to respond to new definitions of reading; and because reformers believe that children will learn to read best by reading literature, basal series are often the focus of criticism.

Researchers have studied current practice in American classrooms through both observations of instructional practice and the recommendations in teacher's editions of basal texts and accompanying workbooks (e.g. Goodman, 1986a, 1986b, 1988; Goodman et al., 1988; Harste, 1989; Hoffman & Roser, 1987; Peterson, 1989; Shannon & Goodman, 1989). While noting that basal series differ in complexity (Barr & Sadow, 1989), some researchers contend that basals have responded to criticism (Aukerman, 1981) and can improve sufficiently with additional modification (Baumann, 1991; Rich & Pressley, 1990). Further, Chall and Squire (1991) argue basals are responding to teachers' and researchers' concerns, including more quality literature; however, such changes take time.

Despite this optimism, criticism has focused on the instruction that results from the use of basal series, specifically that students spend too little time reading text (Anderson et al., 1985; Goodman et al., 1988; Taylor, Frye, & Maruyama, 1990) and that many written activities included in workbooks have little value for students learning to read. Rather, they are time-consuming, tedious, poorly-designed (R. C. Anderson et al., 1985; Osborn, 1984) and differ qualitatively for high- and low-achievers (L. Anderson, Evertson, & Brophy, 1979), conveying a meaning of reading as an accumulation of skills rather than a holistic process of constructing meaning. Absent from the text and accompanying worksheets is the notion of reading as an transaction between the reader and the text (Rosenblatt, 1938) and the role of interaction among readers as they discuss the reading experience (Bloome & Green, 1984). Because of the perspective basal series tends to present of the process of reading, authors of the document "Basal Readers and the State of American Reading Instruction: A Call for Action"

wrote, "For many if not most children, the typical basal reading series may actually make learning to read more difficult than it needs to be" (National Council of Teachers of English, 1988). In addition, Smith (1986) argues that no one learns because of the regimented schedule that includes "disjointed, purposeless, repetitive, confusing, and tedious activities" (p. 7).

As a response to such criticism, many call for the use of literature in elementary reading programs because they believe (a) access to books leads to better readers (R. C. Anderson et al., 1985; Cullinan, 1987), (b) reading literature will result in better skill development (Cullinan, 1987; Elley, 1989; Huck, 1990), (c) reading and discussing literature promotes personal growth (Huck, 1990; Smith, 1990), (d) teaching reading skills is not always necessary (Martin, 1987; Taylor & Frye, 1988; Taylor, Frye, & Gaetz, 1990), and/or (e) reading literature will promote better citizens (Hirsch, 1987; Ravitch & Finn, 1987).

The arguments for improved reading instruction has left the reading community confronting change but unsure about how best to promote literacy. While many argue that using literature to promote reading will insure more proficient readers, others argue that novices need instruction on skills and strategies. Research needs to explore further how literature can promote effective readers and how teachers can best implement reading instruction without the use of basal series. Since reform issues include aspects of the classroom context not specifically related to the materials alone, research investigating such changes must consider the social context in which reform efforts emerge.

A Social Constructivist Perspective

Social constructivism provides a relevant and current perspective on the study of the implementation of a literature-based reading program. More than fifty years ago, Louise Rosenblatt (1938) argued for literary experiences that were intense forms of personal activity, not passive ones assuming that students merely absorb meaning from their teachers and texts. This viewpoint is consistent with Vygotsky's (1986) emphasis on the importance of focusing on the process of the learner's development, including the role of language on the

development of thought. He argued that verbal thought resided within the interception of thought and language. While some experiences might be recorded in verbal thought, others, such as those connected with the arts, might not. Although we may be unable initially to express our response when it rests within nonverbal thought, instruction focused on response to literature may help learners find ways to become more articulate in expressing these images in language. Further, if meanings are constructed within social contexts (Bakhtin, 1986) then the classroom provides a very important setting in which children develop their definition of reading and should be considered when investigating a literature-based reading program.

While other perspectives consider either the reader or the text, a social constructivist perspective emphasizes the interaction among reader, text, and the social context (Gavelek, 1986), proposing that meaning results from this interaction, rather than existing within any one aspect of it. Thus, rather than being viewed as a potentially messy variable that cannot be ignored, the social context is recognized as actively contributing to the construction of meaning.

Many educators and literary critics alike are in theoretical agreement with proponents of a literature-based reading program and their views are in harmony with a social constructivist perspective. For example, proponents of whole language believe that children need to be involved with the language in general and with their own language through real experience (Goodman, 1989). They perceive children as knowledgeable individuals who can make choices about their learning and who should be provided with reading and writing experiences, as well as written and oral ones, that are connected in a meaningful setting (Watson, 1989). Literary critics argue for the role of interaction within a community of readers in the interpretations of text (Fish, 1980; Scholes, 1985). Because of overlapping beliefs about the role of interaction between reader and text within a literate community on the understanding and interpretation of text, research into reader response to literature might gain significant understanding of this process by adopting a social constructivist perspective.

Conclusion

Research helps identify problems with current approaches to reading instruction, but does not help us understand how students will react to such fundamental changes and how these changes will influence the development of students' ability to read and respond to text. Therefore, this study was conducted in a setting in which the instructional component included (a) children's literature as the texts students read, (b) teacher modelling of the process of response to text, (c) student representation of ideas in multiple ways, and (d) student opportunities to interact in large and small groups. This study pursued answers to the following questions:

1. How will elementary students respond to text in student-led discussion groups?
2. What roles will students adopt as they interact in groups?
3. What influence will the instructional context have on student interactions?

Coming to Understand One Literature-Based Reading Program

The study reported here was based on assumptions of what Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) call "naturalistic tradition" and Bogdan and Biklen (1982) call "qualitative research." That is, I assumed that to understand the setting of an elementary classroom in which the teacher was implementing literature-based reading instruction, I needed to spend time within that classroom trying to understand such changes through the eyes of the participants. I was interested in the process children went through as they attempted to understand this new approach to reading instruction. As a regular observer in the classroom, I was a primary instrument in the data collection. My purpose here is to outline the methodology as I explain (a) the context, (b) the participants, and (c) the methods of data collection and analysis.

The Elementary School and the Reading Program

I conducted the study in a Midwestern, urban, fifth-grade classroom. The student population of the classroom and school represents that of the neighborhood: 46% Caucasian, 30% African-American, 18% Hispanic, 4% Asian, and 1% Native American. The majority of parents are unemployed and on ADC; of those who do work, most hold cashier or service jobs in

local department stores, food stores, or fast-food restaurants. A very small percentage hold positions such as teacher's aids or secretaries. Most of the children come from single-parent homes.

The school district outlined curriculum requirements for reading and writing, revised in 1990. Generally, these requirements emphasize the inclusion of literature in reading instruction and a writing program that focuses on process and student choice. In the classroom in which I conducted the study, the teacher was implementing, for the first time, a literature-based reading program, called Book Club.

Book Club Components

The Book Club reading program incorporated four components: (a) reading, (b) writing/representation, (c) instruction, and (d) discussion. While these components were present every day, the order and time allotment varied depending on the needs for that day's lesson. Each of these had additional related strategies for teaching and learning literature.

Reading. Since a literature-based program required the teacher to select many of the books, she made her decisions based on recognition of the book as quality work and on the interests and needs of the students (Purves & Beach, 1972; Sims, 1983). For the period of this study, she chose selections focusing on the theme of war: *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes* (Coerr, 1977), *Hiroshima No Pika* (Maruki, 1982), *Faithful Elephants* (Yukio, 1988), and *Number the Stars* (Lowry, 1989).

In addition to the selection of the books, the teacher was concerned with increasing student ability to read and interact around text through a variety of methods, including reading silently, orally, in pairs, and listening to the teacher or a peer read orally. The teacher also incorporated reading skills and strategies identified in the district's guide, such as predicting, summarizing, and sequencing.

Writing/representation. One major difference between a more traditional approach to reading and this program was the inclusion of opportunities to express personal response in

both writing and illustrations throughout the reading process. Two types of materials were used for instruction and assessment: (a) reading logs and (b) think sheets.

Reading logs were based on the ideas proposed by researchers who suggest that journals provide an important means for students to reflect about their reading, to encourage close reading of text, and to prepare for later sharing of their ideas (Atwell, 1983; Fulwiler, 1982; Gambrell, 1985; McNeil, 1988; O'Sullivan, 1987; Reed, 1988). Students used these logs daily to represent ideas before, after, and during reading; to prepare for discussions; and to provide a record of ideas after instruction and discussions.

Think sheets were based on ideas of Raphael and Englert (1990) who suggest that students benefit from having prompts that serve as a basis for thinking and for dialogues about text, to provide students with culminating experiences that synthesize their responses. The think sheets were more structured than the reading logs in that they requested more specific information.

Instruction. The instructional component included all teacher-led activities designed to support and facilitate both what and how students could share ideas through representations and during discussions (Raphael, McMahon, Goatley, Bentley, Boyd, Pardo, & Woodman, 1991; Raphael, Goatley, McMahon, & Woodman, 1991).

Discussion. Discussion provided students with opportunities to interact over texts in two different social contexts: (a) total-class discussions, called Community Share and (b) small group interactions, called Book Club.

The Book Club Group

Five students comprised the Book Club case study group: two girls and three boys. The group remained intact for the first half of the study and split to contribute to two other groups for the last half. Students were chosen to represent the class in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, and verbal and reading ability. All five students participated in the study for the entire ten weeks; however, one student, Mondo, moved immediately after this, and was unavailable for follow-up interviews.

Mondo, an eleven-year-old Hispanic boy, came from a home in which Spanish is the primary language spoken. He participated in the study until Christmas vacation when his family moved. According to the teacher, Mondo was low academically, but worked hard and always turned in his assignments. He was having difficulty in most content areas and reading below grade level.

Martisse was a ten-year-old African-American girl the teacher described as having very high academic ability, being a very good reader, and capable of handling all fifth-grade work easily. Martisse revealed that she enjoyed reading and often read when at home.

A Caucasian girl with blond hair and blue eyes, Lissa was an average student who seemed to want to do well in school but was not always successful. The teacher described her as an average student who had received D's in many subjects over the year because she had become involved in too many extra-curricular activities, tended to rush through her work, and sometimes neglected to turn it in to the teacher. Reading at grade level, Lissa said she loved books and reported reading at home.

Chris, an African-American boy, was a quiet student of low ability. The teacher related that he had qualified for Chapter 1 in both reading and math at the beginning of the year, but she kept him in his home room for Book Club. He frequently mentioned how much he hated reading, noting this fact in a preliminary questionnaire, in a midpoint survey, and during all interviews.

Bart is a child of mixed ethnicity--his mother is half Japanese and half European while his father is African-American. Bart had good verbal skills, was of average intelligence, and seemed to want to do well in school. During class, he frequently participated in discussions and began assignments immediately.

The Information Collected and Continued Analysis

Data collection and analysis for descriptive work merge together into one ongoing process. The researcher must begin the process early by systematically searching through all the possible documentation to determine which data are relevant and to catalogue materials based on emerging patterns and themes (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). To understand student

participation in the reading program, I collected multiple sources of data, including (a) field notes, (b) audiotaped lessons, (c) audiotaped Book Club meetings, (d) formal and informal interviews of the teacher, (e) formal and informal interviews of the students, and (f) student documents. All tapes were professionally transcribed, but I edited them.

Observing and Recording Field Notes

I observed reading two to three times a week, beginning at the start of the school year and ending at Christmas vacation. During the observations, I took field notes, directing most of my attention to the responses and behaviors of the five students reported in this study. I rarely sat with these students but instead positioned myself closely by the group as soon as I entered the room. The teacher facilitated this by assigning them seats near a large table where I could easily take notes and listen to their interactions.

After observing the class, I listened to the audiotapes of the instruction, Community Share, and Book Club meetings before sending them to a professional transcriber. This practice helped me expand my notes with information I might have forgotten and with additional information about the context during the class period.

I expanded my notes on the computer, clarifying sections of description and noting patterns and themes I saw emerging in student discussions during Book Club and Community Share. I also added impressions or noted patterns I saw emerging in student behavior and interactions. I began a catalogue with sections of my field notes supporting my ideas and using them to help focus further observations. As I identified recurring patterns, I noted this for future observations and subsequent analysis.

Recording the Participants' Words

To capture the participants' own words, I taped the instructional component, Community Share, and student Book Club meetings. Repeated listening to the tapes resulted in my identification of two essential characteristics of the talk I wanted to capture: (a) what topics students in the group wanted to discuss and (b) what roles they appeared to adopt during the discussion. Both of these appeared to influence which ideas remained on the conversational floor

the longest. To attempt to communicate these, I identified six key aspects of the conversations I wanted to note on the transcripts: (a) interruptions in a speaker's turn, (b) overlapping talk, (c) stressed words or phrases, (d) pauses within a speaker's turn as well as between turns, (e) speaker's tone, and (f) time elapsed (see Appendix A). Each of these seemed important when trying to understand the roles students adopted during their interactions as well as the content of what they were saying.

After I had established my scheme for identifying these aspects, I asked others familiar with sociolinguistic analysis to listen to one of the tapes while reading the transcript to establish whether they understood the notations and whether these matched what they heard on the tape.

In addition to my efforts to best capture verbal speech on paper, I listened to the tapes and read the transcripts repeatedly, trying to identify themes and patterns in student talk and behavior during Book Club. I also recorded emerging questions to ask the students during the more formal interviews and noted behaviors I wanted to look for while observing. In addition, I listed questions I had for the teacher regarding instructional issues or student behavior and/or ideas.

Teacher Interviews

During weekly planning meetings, I informally interviewed the teacher, attempting to understand her assessment of the case study students during lessons, the instructional direction she wanted them to take, and the reasons for this. In addition, after I had collected data through December, I formally asked her questions about the school in general and the targeted students in particular, hoping to gain insight into the patterns I had found in the students' written and oral responses.

Student Interviews

To gain some sense of student perceptions of reading and group interactions, I frequently talked with the target group during class as I circulated. I included student answers and/or my impressions of what they were writing in my field notes.

In addition, I scheduled four formal interviews with each of the case-study students. The need for the first one emerged as I continued to reread their logs and transcripts of Book Club meetings. I decided that I wanted more information about them and would attempt to achieve what Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) called "respondent validation" about what they had in their logs. I brought all the data I had collected on each student for the interview: (a) edited transcripts of Book Club meetings, (b) reading logs, and (c) think sheets.

Before the interview, I had marked particular responses or representations that I questioned. I began each interview asking background questions. Then as the student looked through the notebook, I proceeded to ask questions specific to each child's data and in response to their answers. I took notes and taped these interviews.

Still trying to gain the insider's perspective, I also met with these students in groups of two to discuss sections of transcript I had decided to include in the study. I decided that for this type of interview I wanted more interaction among the children; having them meet in groups of two facilitated this. During the interview, students listened to the audiotape and read the edited transcripts. I asked them to listen closely to ascertain whether I had attributed comments to the correct person and whether I had accurately represented what they had said. In addition, I asked them to characterize the mood of the group at the time and explain what individual group members were doing. I audiotaped these sessions.

Such interviews proved helpful as well as confusing. For transcripts in which there was significant overlapping talk, students could better identify their own voices in the mixture of conversation and clarify mumbled words. However, asking them to characterize the climate of the group raised as many questions as it did answers. As Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) cautioned, the participants must reconstruct the event and, at the same time, explain their own actions. Such reconstructed memories require the same levels of analysis as other documents and accounts. Therefore, instead of validating my analysis, these interviews provided yet another set of perspectives to consider about the group interactions.

Finding Patterns and Themes After Data Collection

In general, the analysis of the data led me on many varied paths. I started analysis by searching through individual student data, establishing such categories as (a) behavior of a student, (b) role in Book Club meetings, (c) views of war theme, (d) reactions to other cultures, and (e) personal response. These categories provided opportunities to examine the data closely, focusing on its key aspects.

I continued analysis by searching for patterns emerging within the group by examining each student's ideas as evidenced through representations, in written log entries, and during Book Club meetings. This analysis led me to question dominance of certain members and behaviors that did not contribute to the discussion of the text. As I examined transcripts, I began to see patterns emerging that helped explain group behavior and the resulting focus of discussions.

As I examined the data further, I found different patterns in the groups. During the first half of the unit, in which the five targeted students were members of the same Book Club, three consistent patterns emerged: (a) similar themes and/or topics surfaced across individual students' log entries and in their Book Club discussions, (b) a distinct relationship emerged between students' written and oral texts, and (c) students developed particular roles within their Book Club. During the second half of the unit, the teacher regrouped students, modified the reading log, and changed the focus of instruction. Therefore, as the students read, wrote about, and discussed *Number the Stars*, some patterns remained while other new ones emerged: (a) log entries and discussions displayed a lack of personal response, (b) the relationship between written and oral text continued to emerge, and (c) students tended to adopt roles in their groups that did not often foster interactions about the book.

The Coconstruction of Meaning: How Five Students Learned to Become One Group Redefining Reading

Martisse, Bart, Lissa, Chris, and Mondo developed their abilities to participate in the student-led Book Clubs, growing both in what and how they shared. In this section, I focus on

the first part of the World War II unit when these five students participated in the same Book Club. During this unit, they read three books: *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes*, *Hiroshima No Pika*, and *Faithful Elephants*. I explore their general patterns of interaction, then focus on the analysis of the transcripts of their Book Club discussions.

Emergent Patterns

Each day students met in Book Clubs to discuss ideas related to their reading of the text and written comments in their logs. Analysis of the transcripts of the five case study students interacting in their Book Clubs revealed three emergent patterns: (a) the introduction and development of three themes consistently emerging in the group's conversation, (b) the relationship between students' written and oral texts, and (c) the development of student interactions about texts during these discussions.

The first issue for analysis was the development of themes. As students met and discussed their books, three themes emerged: (a) how war affects all life forms, (b) how characters related to one another, and (c) how cultures differ.

The second issue analyzed was the connections between what the students read, wrote, and discussed. Since the Book Club meetings were just one component of the intervention, they were not the sole influence on what students discussed. What they read and what they wrote or drew in their logs became equally important. Students also selected ideas that were introduced during instruction or Community Share. Further, Book Club discussions, Community Share, and instruction all influenced student writings. As a result, log entries became powerful tools, providing students with opportunities to express their ideas and to enter the conversation.

The third issue of analysis that emerged during Book Club discussions was how the students learned to interact as a group around the text. Initially, conversations resembled solo performances conflicting with other soloists. As the group read additional selections with similar themes, as they shared more common experiences with the books, and as the instruction helped them explicitly examine Book Club interactions, their discussions appeared more like musical selections where particular instruments prevailed, contributing to one unified text.

Throughout the subsequent analysis and discussion of the student interactions in Book Clubs, I will weave these three issues: (a) themes, (b) relationships between written and oral text, and (c) interaction patterns. This paper combines examples of student written text, transcripts from Book Club meetings, information from field notes, and quotes taken from formal and informal interviews. Most of the data are considered in chronological order since one aspect of the argument I am putting forth is that the interactions between these five students developed and changed over time.

Book Club in the Beginning

Students began by reading *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes.* The teacher initiated the new program by enabling students to practice all the components of the reading program; they read, wrote, and discussed their ideas as they predicted what the book might be about. On the second day, she began by asking all of the children to illustrate some section from the first chapter they most wanted to discuss in Book Club. Through these drawings, students introduced the emergent themes they continued to discuss for the next several weeks.

Student Representations

Bart began drawing immediately, creating a representation of a plane dropping a bomb on a carnival and illustrating his initial focus on weapons and death. There was little evidence that Bart questioned the idea of war, the outcomes, or made any value judgment. In this drawing, many small, faceless figures fall soundlessly to their death. People on the ground are drawn exactly like those falling. There is no evidence of pain or suffering.

Chris chose to follow Bart's lead in his choice of illustration. Field notes revealed that the teacher suggested students might look at one another's drawings for additional ideas. Chris waited several minutes but then followed the teacher's direction and examined Bart's paper before settling into his own drawing. Later, he revealed in an interview that he did not like to draw and that it was Bart's idea to illustrate the bombing of the carnival. Thus, since he followed Bart's lead when considering what to draw, he, too, focused on the weapons of war.

Another student Bart's representation seemed to have influenced was Mondo. Field notes indicated that Mondo had first drawn a picture representing the family praying to their dead grandmother, but later, perhaps just before or during Book Club, Mondo added a picture of a plane dropping bombs.

Lissa and Martisse each focused on interpersonal relationships. Like Mondo, Lissa drew the family praying to their grandmother who had died during the bombing of Hiroshima. Martisse's drawing represented a conversation between Sadako and her mother relating the serious effects of war and of the Peace Day Carnival that commemorates it.

As their drawings demonstrated, the students prepared for their Book Club discussion by illustrating two prevalent themes: the effects of war and the relationships between family members. An observer who saw only the drawings might predict that the resulting discussion would include somewhat equal attention to both issues.

Meeting in Book Club

The actual Book Club meeting, however, was not so balanced with respect to participation or content. While all group members referred to their drawings as they talked and all had an opportunity to share what they had drawn, only Bart's and Chris's ideas received significant attention. This attention did not seem to be the result of students' valuing this theme more, or that Bart's and Chris's representations were better or more relevant. Instead, the interaction styles of these two boys contributed to their domination of the discussion.

Bart initiated the conversation referring to his drawing of the Peace Day carnival being bombed. His verbal description, like the drawing, reflected a lack of concern for those hurt in war. Further, he and the other Book Club members found humor in his drawing as they engaged in conversation about the bombing of the carnival. While this particular section of transcript includes the conversation between Bart and Chris only, the other members appeared to be actively listening.

1	005	Bart:	This is Bart um, hmm, I drew um, that um, airplane dropping a bomb on that fair. And there's dead people laying on the ground (He laughs) /// and um it it it exploded, and gas is killing them,

			they're all falling on the ground // and their eyes are popped out, an' they're, an' they're, and they're dead. And they fell off the roller coaster,
	011		(Chris Laughs)
2		Bart:	Splattered (Bart laughs).
3		Martisse:	Go Chris.
4		Chris:	You through? (To Bart.)
5		Bart:	Yeah.
6		Chris:	My name is Chris. I drew. I drew.
7		Martisse:	You gotta talk louder.
8	013	Chris:	I drew the story of the bomb, bomb, falling on the fair. (Laughing) Boom! Boom!
9			(Bart Laughs)
10	014	Chris:	And people said, "Heeelp! Heeeelp!"
11	015	Bart:	I'm dying! The gas is getting to me!
12			(Chris Laughs)
13	016	Chris:	And they trying to run to their houses saying, "Help! Help! Let me in." And their brains poppin' out their heads. I'm finished. (Book Club Transcript, October 1, 1990)

Bart's initial comment seemed to have led the group into a comic mood even though the topic he introduced was serious. Field notes from this discussion described all of the students as actively involved, all sitting closely together in a circle listening to Bart and Chris discuss their drawings and laughing at their descriptions. Bart contributed ideas to Chris's explanation, adding to a general sense that war and bombs can be funny.

In a later interview with pairs of students, I asked four of the original group members (Bart and Chris, Martisse, and Lissa) to listen to the tape. All four children laughed again as they listened. I asked each what was funny about this. Chris responded, "Bart. The way he was talkin', 'the bomb hit and they fell off and hit their head . . .' It was funny." Comments both Martisse and Lissa provided supported Chris' assessment that it was Bart's method of explaining his drawing that created the humor.

In addition to illustrating how Bart took control of the flow of the conversation, this section of transcript illustrated the role Martisse initiated here and continued later as conductor of the conversation. She immediately called on Chris to follow Bart's contribution even though Chris' question (line 4) indicated he was not sure Bart was finished. Whether he had intended to say more or not, Bart relinquished the floor to Chris. Martisse's direction continued the flow of conversation by quickly identifying the next speaker. Her direction also led the group into a round-robin style of interaction. That is, after each member read an entry, the next speaker took a turn, following the interaction pattern they were probably most accustomed to during small group discussions during reading.

As the interaction continued, Martisse shared her drawing which changed the focus from the war theme to that of interpersonal relationships. She related the conversation between Sadako and her mother in which the mother wanted Sadako to understand the serious event commemorated by the Peace Day Carnival. Sadako, on the other hand, typified a child's response that the carnival was a place to go have fun.

While field notes indicated that Lissa listened to Martisse, they also recorded Bart and Chris busy talking to one another. Mondo divided his attention between Martisse and the other two boys. When Martisse had finished, Lissa and Mondo attempted to present their drawings, but were interrupted by Bart or Chris.

A Look at the First Day's Discussion

This first transcript illustrated the three emergent patterns that remained constant for this group. First, two recurrent themes surfaced this first day: (a) the effects of war and (b) interpersonal relationships of the characters. On this first day, students pursued the war theme more diligently, adopting a humorous tone because of the domination of some group members.

Second, the relationship between what they had drawn and what they chose to introduce as topics for conversation were directly related. Every student began by referring to her/his drawing and creating a narrative around it. A simple relationship could be expected because the

teacher had asked students to share their drawings. At the same time, a deeper relationship emerged. These drawings and the constructed narratives provided students the primary inroad to the conversation. All participants, except Mondo, remained relatively silent until they had begun interacting over their drawing.

Finally, this transcript illustrated how the children have not yet learned to develop a conversation around every student's ideas. Each began with a narrative about the drawing, but none of them demonstrated that they knew how to sustain a conversation related to the presented themes, except for the one Bart introduced. The students had not yet come to see the Book Club meeting as a time to interact over everyone's ideas. Since the teacher had just begun the reading program, she had included instruction on how and what to share that day only. Students had not yet had time to learn the new ways to discuss text that she was introducing. Vygotsky (1986) has noted the continuing need for children to have language that scaffolds their learning. The adult needs to continually provide language to the learner that facilitates the internalization of the new information. Further, Bakhtin (1986) has argued that meanings are grounded in social settings and individuals adopt speech genres for these settings. These students, who had had four years of prior schooling, had already adopted particular meanings and speech genres for interaction in groups both during reading and other times during the day. One day's instruction was insufficient for students to change adopted patterns. Individuals, particularly Bart and Chris, dominated the direction and tone of the discussion. Even though Martisse, Lissa, and Mondo chose more serious topics and Bart's drawing was not in itself humorous, the prevalent theme revolved around the humor they found initially in Bart's description of the bombing of the carnival. Particularly influential were Bart's and Chris's attitudes. They seemed to want (a) to control the conversation by directing it to humorous accounts of war instead of the serious aspects of it and (b) to have their ideas valued.

Coming Together as an Ensemble

Throughout the next two weeks, students maintained their focus on the novel *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes*. They continued to read, record log entries, and discuss both in Book

Club and Community Share their ideas about the final chapters of the novel. Not surprisingly, during the ensuing reading all of the children directed their attention to Sadako and her death. This led to their relating more sensitive feelings about the effects of war. After having finished *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes*, they moved to *Hiroshima No Pika*. When they began reading the third book, *Faithful Elephants*, the influence of the instructional context became clearer.

Reading and Responding to *Faithful Elephants*

Reading, writing, and discussing the other two books seemed to have influenced the group when they read and discussed the next book, *Faithful Elephants*. Before reading the book, the teacher asked students to predict what they thought this picture book would be about by examining the cover of the book. After this, she had them move to the rug to listen to her read the story. Field notes recorded that the instructional component was much like that of any other day. After she had finished reading the story, she asked students to very quietly return to their seats to write what they were feeling. All of the students seemed subdued.

Log entries. Reading the students' log entries illustrated how differently all the children approached the reading of this book and how similarly they felt afterward.

Bart connected the previous books to this new one by thinking that this would be about using animals in warfare. He wrote[2], "It might be about people use ing animals to fight in war or it could be about using animals weapons like elephants tucks, training them how to use animals weapons to kill shoulders in the war." His response echoed his first drawing, focusing on the weapons of war. Bart had not considered that, like people, animals, too, are victims of war. After hearing the book read, Bart wrote, "This story was more sad than the one Yesterday if I had elephants I would feed them every day so they would not starve." Bart recorded his sadness that these animals had become victims of war just like the characters in the other books he had read.

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[2]All student responses are printed exactly as they had written them.

Lissa selected a similar theme since she assumed the elephants were going to fight with the people. "I think that it is going to be about awar and the Elefants are going to fight with the people." Her notion seemed to be that the elephants would join people in battle though she, too, did not seem to consider that animals get hurt. After the story, Lissa wrote very little. "I fell very sad about this story." She had underlined every word in this sentence, perhaps to emphasize her feelings.

Mondo's ideas about *Faithful Elephants* seemed to echo Lissa's. He wrote, "I think it's prombabe it go to be About the War ware peopl get killed. And ware Elephants come to the war in one of the time. And thay to kill the people for they can win the war for thay can get to win." Mondo's weak writing skills prevent a clear understanding of what he was trying to say; however, the gist of his prediction seemed to be that elephants will fight in the war and this might help some people to win. After the story, he wrote, "I feell sorry for the janpan [Japanese] and the animals and the Elanphants." Like Bart and Lissa , Mondo felt remorse for the characters in the book.

Chris was the only Book Club member to predict the elephants would be killed. "it is going to be about men killing elefligant and they are going to be people that care for them and if they are goging to crie and they are going to fill Bad and the war men are going to kill." Chris's was the prediction closest to the actual events in the book. After hearing the story he wrote, "I fell sad they did not have to kill them and they could have stop the war they were doing thing [nothing]." Even though he had accurately predicted the death of the elephants, Chris seemed as sad as the other students after hearing the story.

Martisse was absent from school this day, so her prediction and revision was not available.

Book Club. As their log entries and field notes revealed, students entered their Book Clubs depressed. They seemed shocked that anyone could have killed the innocent elephants. The Book Club meeting after hearing *Faithful Elephants* illustrated how advanced these students had become in learning how to interact in their group.

1	Bart:	Um I thought this story was sad, bec, in a way it's, it, the way my feelings are different from the one is that these are animals, y'know, and you don't, and, um, y'see, // people are different from animals, like elephants. I wouldn't make 'em starve and everything. I would keep good track of 'em because if they love 'em so much, why'd they do it? And when they dropped the bomb, it could've been over, and it was over! 'Cuz the war // 'cuz if it wasn't over, the war would still be going on right now in Japan. And I went to Japan. The answer is gone. I went to Tokyo. And everything's rebuilt and everything.
2	Mondo:	I thought it was, I thought it was different. 'Cuz I wrote right here, I thought that they were gonna use the elephants to, for the war, to kill the people.

/ / / / /

3	Lissa:	Um, I thought the story was sad, because there's like ten million thousand people in this world //// but there's not very many elephants or any tigers, and I // and I don't see why they have to kill all the animals.
4	Chris:	Um, well, (clears throat) this is Chris. I think that was bogue killin' those animals, and if they love 'em so much, they shouldn't 'a' killed 'em; they shoulda just wait for the bomb to drop, then let 'em die in peace...
5	Lissa:	Yeah.
6	Chris:	. . . instead of starvin' 'em to death. (Book Club Transcript, October 23, 1990)

Like some prior meetings, students began by adopting a round-robin style of interaction; however, unlike previous Book Clubs, this one began with all of the members sharing what they had written in their logs without interruption. Each participant got the floor long enough to make an opening statement. Another difference was that all the members focused on the same theme--war, not surprising given the power of the book.

As the meeting continued, students dropped the routinized form of interaction as they pursued the theme concerning the cruelty of war. During the following interaction, Bart, Mondo, and Chris debate alternatives the zoo keepers could have embraced.

7	Lissa:	But they couldn't kill the people, couldn't kill the people.
8	Chris:	And those dumb folks up in the air coulda stopped that war. Why do they always drop it on the people that know they can't do

anything back.

/ /

9	Bart:	They shouldn't 'a' put 'em through misery like that. If they really did wanna kill 'em, they shoulda just did it fast, 'cuz they made 'em suffer. And it rea, and it really hurt 'em, I guess.
10	Mondo:	They should just. . .
11	Bart:	And I wouldn't like it. And if that happened to them, I betcha they wouldn't like it at all; they would be beggin'.
12	Mondo:	They shoulda just shoot, shot 'em with the elephant gun.
13	Chris:	They tried to.
14	Mondo:	No, but. . .
15	Chris:	They broke the middle.
16	Mondo:	No, but a gun.
17	Bart:	An elephant gun, and shoot 'em.
18	Mondo:	About, the bullet's about that big.

Lissa began this section of the conversation by attempting to understand the position of the administrators who decreed that all the dangerous zoo animals be destroyed. Her comment stimulated an interaction among the boys about how the zoo keepers could have killed the elephants more humanely. For the first time, the students were working together to come up with an answer. They did not all agree about the specifics, but they did agree about the goal--to solve the problem in a more humane way.

Improvement With Further Practice

After several lessons about how to interact in Book Club and several meetings to practice with one another, this group seemed to have made significant progress as evidenced by this section of transcript. Further, they seemed to understand more explicitly what participation in Book Club required. Provided with continued modeling, explicit instruction, support, and sufficient opportunities for practice, they learned to interact as one group, eventually uniting the three themes that resurfaced in all of their written and oral texts. Also, they came to value their log entries as keys to entering the conversation.

Before continuing the unit with another novel set during World War II, the teacher decided to adjust the Book Club membership and the instructional focus. As the five students separated to contribute to two other Book Clubs and as the log activities changed, new patterns emerged. This change is the focus of the next section.

Constructing Meaning With a Different Group: Returning to Old Definitions

When the class had completed *Faithful Elephants*, the teacher made several decisions that influenced the course of subsequent Book Club interactions. First, some groups did not seem to be progressing in their interactions as well as others. The teacher's decision to reconstitute groups, attempting to find a better student mix resulted in the separation of the case study students into two new groups. Bart, Martisse, and Lissa remained together, joining Anthony and Roger. Chris and Mondo joined Leroy, Natashia, and Nora.

A second change, related to increased demands on the teacher's time, took her from the classroom. In the weeks from the beginning of November until Christmas, she was scheduled for several professional functions outside class an average of once a week. From previous experience she knew her class worked best with very specific directions. In the past, more open-ended activities requiring student-initiated responsibility had frequently failed when she was not there. Thus, she decided to plan lessons that a substitute teacher could implement successfully. These plans included more teacher-directed activities and emphasized the skills and strategies with which substitute teachers were more familiar.

Finally, the third book, *Number the Stars*, required adjustments since the change in setting from Japan to Europe required students to formulate information about a different country--its customs, the people, and the reactions to the War.

All three of these conditions influenced the context in which the students read and interacted, with groups adjusting to the new instructional focus, new content, and new group members and their interests.

New Groups Coming Together

Even though the teacher adjusted the focus of instruction during reading, the original components remained intact when she was there. Her instruction continued to include modeling for the entire class. Students continued to read, write, and interact in both large and small groups. However, subtle changes were significant as the reading logs and Book Club discussions revealed.

Instruction and Community Share Day One of *Number the Stars*

The class began *Number the Stars* much like it did the previous three books. That is, instruction focused on predicting the story plot based on the title and cover. Field notes revealed that this activity was similar to previous ones. All five students in the original target Book Club wrote predictions that reflected their reading of the previous three books, revealing intertextual links.

Mondo predicted that the main character would be in a war and lose her parents, noting the girl on the front cover had a sad face. In so doing, Mondo connected to the first three books in two ways. First, he drew on the idea of the death of a family member and the related sadness. Second, he focused on interpersonal relationships, a theme he had seemed most attracted to in the previous books.

Martisse's comments reveal a second example when she responded, "She might have Leukemia and there might be a new way to get rid of it." For her the key intertextual link was leukemia and finding new ways to combat the disease.

Lissa provided further evidence that the students were making connections between the reading experiences for this book and the previous three, predicting that the girl had a necklace and she wished the war would stop, adding that she got this idea from the cover of the book.

Bart wrote, "It could be about her making paper stars. Or her having star neckleses. or her mom dying. She might try to pass the Germany wall to save her friend" Bart combined ideas he gained from the title and the teacher's information about the change in setting with his prior knowledge from the previous books regarding Sadako's making the paper cranes.

Picking up on the weapons of war, Chris wrote, "it is going to be abuot a war and ther is a gril how is going to count the stars as many days as they get booed [bombed] and they proleb get boomed every nigh no stop and there is going to be pople going to die and pople are going to heve any were to live and no food and there pople."

Book Clubs

After predicting the plot, students met in their new Book Clubs to discuss their ideas. Interestingly, transcripts of both groups revealed no consistent themes and, in fact, little interaction. Rather, students took turns reading from their logs. While logs continued to provide members entrance to the conversation, they did not focus on student interests spawned by the book, but recounted text events instead. Further, once they had read their entries, limited discussion resulted. After each member finished, the group turned to another student to read.

While the interaction pattern seemed to have reverted to a round-robin style, roles established in the previous group appeared to continue. Bart maintained his dominant role of beginning the discussions, Lissa continued to speak with authority, and Chris and Mondo followed the lead of other group members. Only Martisse's role as conductor seemed lost. However, since they had apparently agreed to read their logs in order, with little overlapping talk, there was no need for anyone to adopt such a role.

In many ways the two groups began their Book Clubs discussing *Number the Stars* by following the same pattern the case study group had demonstrated by the end of the section of the unit on Japan. That is, they began by reading their log entries to the entire group. However, unlike their final Book Club synthesizing books set in Japan, they never elaborated the ideas. Both groups seemed unable to sustain any conversation. In addition, Chris' group also seemed unable to maintain any momentum. Each member's contribution was followed by several seconds of silence as if they did not know what to do and lacked leadership to control the flow of the conversation when it lagged.

At least two reasons could have contributed to these changes. First, the student groupings were new and they had not interacted with each other around books before. As evidence from the case study group during the first half of the unit revealed, it took time to establish patterns of interaction.

A second reason might have been the new focus on the text. Even though this was just the beginning of the unit and on the surface the teacher's introduction resembled the one she prepared for *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes*, subtle messages conveyed that the instruction was different. Through assignments in their logs and drawings, the teacher stressed a focus on the events in the book, asking students to interpret how the characters reacted to them. Instead of prompts that elicited individual response, the assignment might have seemed more like the traditional comprehension questions.

Regardless of the reasons for the new characteristics, the first Book Club meetings with the new groupings found students struggling with how to interact. As the unit progressed, the groups remained limited in their interactions surrounding text. The next section focuses on one group several weeks later after continued instruction and interactions with the new group to illustrate how the text-based focus led to the round-robin style of interaction becoming predominant.

Established Patterns Are Hard to Break

The instructional plans for December 17 included a review of the previous two chapters and silent reading of chapter fifteen. When students had completed the reading, the teacher asked them to write something to share in Book Club. Since the teacher realized the interactions within the groups were not as sustained as they had been before, she hoped that by providing a more open-ended prompt, students would see this as an opportunity to write and discuss topics of choice. She also encouraged them to draw a scene they most remembered from one of the recent chapters.

Even though they could write whatever they wanted, all five targeted students chose to provide summaries of events in the book. Further, despite the efforts to open up the dialogues,

both Book Clubs displayed very similar tendencies. Neither group engaged in conversations surrounding events in the book. Instead, each member read his/her log entry and stopped. While this describes only one group, the patterns were remarkably similar in both.

Bart's Book Club (December 17)

Students began their Book Club as they had in the more recent past, by one member reading a log entry. As before, Bart began.

3025 Bart: I put, Annemarie was walking down the path and all of a sudden she saw two soldiers. Two soldiers stopped her and said, "My dogs smell meat." / So the two, so the soldiers went through her bag and took everything out, and took everything out, yeah. Two soldiers took the bread and gave it to the two dogs, and, um, so then, um, Annemarie was, was crying like she was thinking all the things Kirsti would do, so she was doing that, and she said (talking in a voice like a child's), "My Uncle Henrich's gonna be mad at me," and she was crying and stuff, so, so then the soldiers said, "All right, go ahead, but tell, tell your Uncle Henrich and your mom that I gave the dogs your bread, so that's what I wrote.

/ /

4 Anthony: [Okay, I put. . .

5 Martisse: [Uhmm.

//// (Some whispering)

6 Bart: I'm pointing, I'm pointing.

///

7 Bart: Martisse.

8 150 Martisse: Why do you think the dogs smelled the meat? (Transcript, December 17, 1990)

Bart began the group following the established pattern of reading the log. When he appeared finished, Anthony started to read his log, forgetting to ask a question. (By this time, the groups had adopted the teacher's suggestion that they point to someone to ask a question when

they had finished. Both group had established asking "Why" questions as Martisse's request illustrated [line 8].) Martisse seemed to catch his haste and, maintaining her role as conductor, somehow communicated to Bart that he forgot to designate a questioner because he said, "I'm pointing" (line 6). Her question (line 8) did not really make sense because the book merely stated the dogs smelled meat. Bart, after some initial confusion about her question, answered that the book made this point clear.

9	153	Bart:	Well, I thought that, well, I thought that the dogs smelled the meat. I really, I really knew that the dogs smelled meat because it said in the story, and the soldiers said it, and I, I, the way the dogs were acting, I think they did smell the meat, so that's why.
/// ///			
10	217	Anthony:	I put /// I drew a picture of uhm of I put that there was four soldiers, that they stopped Annemarie because she was going to her, um, Uncle Henrich's house to give him some food, and, um, ////// (Sounds as if Lissa asked a question that the tape did not pick up. Bart responded. This seemed to distract Anthony.) and that, um, and that, um, the dog growled at her, and he said that they smelled meat, and he said that they would let the dog, that they'll let Annemarie go, so they let her go. Anthony.
/////			
11	301	Lissa:	(Whispering) You got to point.
/ /			
12	303	Anthony:	I want, // Bart. (Transcript, December 17, 1990)

After Bart answered his question, no further interaction occurred. Following a brief pause, Anthony read his log. Lissa's comment (line 11) demonstrated that the Book Club group had become dependent on a member pointing to another member before anyone could ask a question or the group could go on. The conversation between Lissa and Bart during Anthony's turn also illustrated how the group had again begun to pursue other conversations while one member read a log entry.

The meeting continued for several more minutes, but the pattern never changed and the students never engaged in dialogue about the book. Instead, they followed a regimented pattern of reading their log, designating a questioner, a member asking a "Why" question, the reader

responding, then another member reading the log after a brief pause. When all members had shared their entries, the group ended and turned off the tape recorder.

In addition to the rigid pattern of turn taking that emerged, the groups seemed to have lost their ability to maintain flow to the conversation. Unlike earlier conversations where Martisse acted as the conductor, indicating which student should go next and not allowing dead time between speakers, this transcript was marked by long segments in which no one was talking. This silence did not appear to be reflection time since subsequent talk was not related to anything the previous speaker said.

Conclusions

Many aspects of the classroom instruction and atmosphere contributed to the patterns student groups established in their Book Clubs for *Number the Stars*. First was the difference in the composition of the groups. The targeted students appeared to have established patterns of conversation by the end of the first section of the unit; however, forming new groups required students to establish new interactional patterns.

A second contributing factor to the patterns established within these two groups might have been the interruptions in the class reading of the book. Unlike the unit on Japan during World War II, the reading of *Number the Stars* was interrupted by holidays and marked by substitute teaching. Students could not read the early chapters in succession. Such disruptions might have influenced how they felt about the book and about Book Club meetings.

The third influential factor might have been the consistent focus on reading skills. This was the reading program, so this teacher had a responsibility to teach skills and strategies. The unit focusing on Japan also included such reading emphases; however, one primary difference was the amount. During the unit on Japan, reading skills were interspersed with activities emphasizing personal response. On the other hand, the unit on *Number the Stars* consisted primarily of a focus on skills and strategies. Instruction and assigned log entries emphasized making and revising predictions. Students had little opportunity to pursue aspects of the novel they found interesting. The assigned log entries and resulting conversations did not allow

students an opportunity to address specifically what they did or did not like about the book, to make connections to early reading or experiences, to clarify confusing parts, or to highlight particular parts of the book they found worthy of discussion. Despite early connections to the other books, students quickly adopted the pattern of reading related answers from their logs and neglected to make connections to other texts. Instruction that focused on the skills of predicting and summarizing also did not facilitate such connections.

Book Clubs and Literature-Based Reading Instruction: The Research Questions

This literature-based reading program introduced these fifth-graders to a new definition of reading. That is, instead of the basal text and its accompanying worksheets and tests, students read trade books, recorded their ideas in reading logs, participated in culminating experiences that fostered critical reading and synthesis across texts, and discussed ideas in both small and large groups. This first semester of the new reading program seemed to indicate two distinct patterns: one associated with the books set in Japan during World War II and one associated with a book set in Europe during the same time period. The events in this classroom over the course of the semester illustrate several factors of the theory and related research questions.

How Will Elementary Students Respond to Text in Student-led Discussion Groups?

Analysis of the data from this study revealed that when students participate in a literature-based program in which the focus frequently encouraged personal response, they introduced and developed themes and topics interesting to them; however, when the components of the instructional context consistently stressed skills and/or strategies, students responded with text-based summaries. Such changes in response support Rosenblatt's (1938) distinctions between aesthetic and efferent purposes for reading. When the teacher encouraged students to respond aesthetically to the experience of reading, they explored several key issues the text introduced. The case study group consistently explored (a) the effects of war, (b) interpersonal relationships, and (c) cultural differences. The multiplicity of ideas regarding three different themes provoked lively interactions about ideas presented by reading the text.

Continued reading, writing, and discussions centered on these themes enabled the group to tie them together during a synthesis Book Club meeting.

At the same time, when the teacher pursued the efferent stance by asking students to record predictions or summaries, a stance implying they look for specific events in the text, responses across students remained remarkably similar. Book Club interactions became routinized, resembling round-robin reading groups. Seldom did students engage in debates about ideas. Book Clubs discussing the early chapters of the book were remarkably similar to those at the end, indicating little growth in students' ability to interact like mature readers discussing texts.

Vygotsky's theories about the relationship between thought and language help explain these differences. During the first section of the unit, the teacher used words like "share your ideas" or "relate what you find important." Such language enabled students to focus on their own response, not on relating events from the text. During the second section, her language emphasized the text with such terms as "predict" or "summarize." In addition, she frequently referred to "going around in your group" which might have triggered images of former reading groups. This language influenced how children thought about their reading experiences. As Bakhtin (1986) noted, words are defined in social settings. Children defined their reading based on the social contexts of this classroom and others in which they read. This context changed, so they modified their definitions based on the language the teacher used when she referred to reading, thus, influencing their interactions in Book Club.

Therefore, findings from this study indicate that language associated with the aesthetic stance will more likely prompt students to reveal what they bring to or take from the meaning-making process of reading, whereas language associated with an efferent stance appears to minimize this. Therefore, if the teacher's purpose is to elaborate and connect student feelings, thoughts, or concerns regarding literature, she should incorporate language promoting an aesthetic stance. If her purpose is to provide students with opportunities to master skills and strategies to enhance their own reading abilities, she should include language promoting an

efferent stance. A balanced reading program would include both (Freppon, 1991; Fisher & Hiebert, 1990).

What Roles Will Students Adopt As They Interact in Groups?

Cohen (1986) noted that some students will frequently dominate small group interactions because they have greater status than their peers. Such an idea links to Mead's notions about the "generalized other" (Mead, 1934). Mead argued that when we interact with others, we constantly attempt to read their reactions, trying to see ourselves as they see us. Cohen's findings that student status among peers influences small group discussions demonstrate how individuals' perceptions of self, drawn from the relationship established while interacting with others, affects the conversation.

Throughout the semester, all three Book Club groupings I studied displayed interactional patterns in which certain group members dominated. During the first section, Bart and Chris tended to control topic choice as Martisse controlled the conversational flow. Neither Lissa nor Mondo had sufficient status to direct the discussion.

With the reconstitution of the groups, student statuses shifted because of new group members. Bart lost Chris as his fan. The new members of Bart's group, Anthony and Roger, did not appear to follow his lead by copying what Bart wrote in his log, nor did they respond to his ideas with the enthusiasm that Chris did. Although Bart continued to begin Book Club meetings by reading his log, no one encouraged him to expand the ideas he introduced. At the same time, Martisse's role as conductor was not as necessary because students had adopted a round-robin style of interaction. In Chris's group, neither Chris nor Mondo directed either the content or the methods of interacting. Instead, they each followed other group members, resulting in frequent periods of silence, student-read log entries with little interaction, and smaller groups of students discussing issues unrelated to the book.

Therefore, this study supports Cohen's findings that students with varied statuses can dominate and thus influence the direction of the group's discussion. Further, a social constructivist perspective helps illuminate our understanding that these statuses are not static,

but dynamic, depending on the composition of the group. While some might argue for assigning roles to students (e.g., Slavin, 1983), a teacher needs to monitor constantly student interactions to assess how statuses influence discussions.

What Influence Will the Instructional Context Have on Student Interactions?

Pernaps one of the most interesting findings in this study was the impact of the multiple components of the instructional context on student interactions. These components--(a) the types of learning stressed, (b) the use of multiple representations of knowledge, (c) the interactional patterns modelled and encouraged, and (d) the role of the teacher--came together to promote change in student learning. In the beginning, the teacher's focus was on individual interests and interpretations before, after, and during reading, leading to changes in the group interactions. Specifically, she had an impact on the types of learning students experienced through her explicit instruction on both what and how to share during the first section of the unit which appeared to further student abilities to interact around ideas presented. When the case group first met, members were more likely to (a) dominate, (b) ignore other members, and (c) elaborate only ideas interesting to dominating members. With continued instruction, monitoring, and assigned activities highlighting personal response, the group began interacting as a whole, constructing joint arguments.

In contrast, during the second section of the unit, the learning emphasized prediction and summarization. Such a focus caused students to remain closely bound to the text, impatient with alternate readings and hesitant or unable to engage in lengthy discourse about the text. Further, this focus on the text discouraged debates about ideas since the goal was to predict or summarize events already established within the text.

Just as with the types of responses students provided, the instructional foci demonstrates Vygotsky's belief about the relationship between thought and language. The instructional language throughout the semester developed students' thinking about reading. During the first section of the unit the teacher conveyed a process approach to reading, both as a reader and as a participant within Book Club. While students occasionally predicted text events,

they also explored how their own ideas and feelings were changing. In contrast, throughout reading *Number the Stars* students continued to predict and revise predictions based on the text, rarely bringing in their own thoughts or feelings. The teacher's language referred to elements of the text, not the interaction between reader and text, which hampered student thinking about reading as a process. This distinction led students to define reading and interaction over text in different ways.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Following five students as they experienced a dramatically new reading program provided significant descriptions of what they wrote and discussed, as well as how they managed their interactions. The teacher's role and the constraints upon her ability to make changes helped illuminate issues surrounding the differences in the Book Club groups. This section of the chapter explores the implications of this work.

Theoretical Implications

A social constructivist theory links the close relationship among thought, language, and the social context. This study provides further evidence of this close association. When students were consistently provided instructional support through explanations and modeling of new vocabulary and new expectations, they seemed to be modifying their meaning of the word "reading." When these supports were withdrawn, prior experiences, meanings, and memories of other contexts appeared to override new ones. The social context of the classroom and the interactions between the teacher and the students highly influenced how the students interacted with text.

Such a study highlights the complexity of social interactions. Every teacher inherits a group of students with multiple social experiences that influence how they understand school subjects and expectations. They have adopted particular speech genres for school, home, play, and all the other social activities in which they engage. Since switching from one to another speech genre is often subtle and rarely conscious, trying to alter these is possible but difficult.

Practical Implications

The call for educational reform is a national phenomenon. Many groups have their answers for how best to improve education. While such reforms may be possible, they are complex and never easy. Changing how children interact in classrooms is clearly difficult. As Cazden (1988) writes, "Unfortunately, a change in teacher intent is not sufficient. Teachers and students alike are well practiced in lesson behavior, and talking in another way doesn't come easily" (p. 60). Such a change requires persistent, conscious effort.

The first implication of this work relates to the problem of teaching reading while using literature. Regardless of the specific problems that the teacher encountered while having the class read the fourth book, at some point she had to address the need to teach those skills and strategies dictated by the district's curriculum. Perhaps it was less the inclusion of these in the reading program than the fact that they were included all at once that proved problematic. Such reading programs need to address curriculum mandates, but with more balance. As L. M. Anderson (1989) argues, programs calling for significant modifications in current practice need to help teachers consider how the new program fits with existing school objectives. The literature-based reading program the teacher initiated might have been more effective if it included plans for how to incorporate the required skills and strategies throughout the year.

A second implication relates to teacher education. Those of us who propose such major changes in instruction need to consider the depth of the reforms we propose. To ask teachers to modify their reading instruction by including literature and focusing on personal response requires fundamental changes not only in the context of a classroom, but also all prior educational contexts of which students and teachers have been a part. Constraints limiting individual teachers must be considered. These include not only the teacher's role within the classroom, but outside as he or she participates in other professional activities. As teacher educators, we must consider the ramifications of such reform, as well as the required effort. All reform takes time, but reform requiring such integral changes requires not just time, but

continual reassessment and adjustment. Teachers will need support if we expect them to modify decades of educational practice.

Finally, this study raises two implications for educational research. First, the length of time devoted to conducting this study. In comparison to prior educational research, one semester is a long time to collect data. However, many questions remain that might have been answered had I continued to collect data. As educational researchers, we need to recognize that reform takes considerable time. One semester is not sufficient time to evaluate the success of any change. Researchers exploring reform within instructional contexts need to expand their time frames of data collection to even begin to understand the ramifications of change.

Second, as researchers, we are often hesitant to present evidence that a program did not work. Presenting the data from this study was no exception. However, it was the evidence from this section of the unit, when students were not interacting well in groups that helped illuminate what was working in the first section. Had the study ended within the first month, making such changes in reading instruction might have appeared easy. Had it taken place only within the last section of the unit, it would have presented a strong case that such interactions in student-led groups around text were impossible. It was only through the presentation of both sections that we could come to understand the successful and unsuccessful components of the program. Other researchers need to consider how reporting instructional reforms when they are not working also instructs the educational community, sometimes even more than reports of successful changes.

Limitations of the Study

After data collection, analysis, and reporting the results, a researcher realizes that even the best planned study has limitations. This one is no exception. This section describes the limitations of this study: (a) the number of students studied, (b) the timing of the study, and (c) the omission of the participants' definition of reading in their own words before the study began.

The first limiting factor of this study was the fact that I studied only one group of five students. Such a focus prohibited any ability to describe the reading experience for the rest of the class. Whether the interactional patterns, the roles group members adopted, or the impact of instruction was in any way similar for the rest of the students is unknown.

A second limiting factor was the timing of the study. One semester was not sufficient time to understand the results of the teacher's attempts to change reading instruction. In addition to this, however, collecting data at that particular time of year was also limiting. While beginning as the school year commenced provided interesting data about the initial implementation of the literature-based program, it also occurred during one of the most disruptive times of the school year due to several holidays distracting children from school work: Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. A ten-week period during the winter might have had fewer disruptions in the schedule and to students' thinking.

One of the characteristics of educational research drawn from a naturalistic tradition is that issues emerge during data collection and analysis that prove important to the final report. One such issue was how these students defined reading. If I had foreseen how important this was, I would have interviewed the five students before school began and during the year to attempt to capture their meaning of reading. While such reporting is limited, their individual perceptions of reading throughout the year would have enhanced the findings of this study. Thus, the third limitation of the study is that it did not attempt to capture this.

Questions for Future Research

Like all research, this study leaves the investigator with more questions than answers. This section concludes with suggestions for future research.

The first question for future research emerged from what appeared to be a close connection between students' written and oral texts. Throughout the entire semester, students maintained reading logs in which they wrote or represented through drawings and/or conceptual maps issues they discussed in Book Club. While there is considerable research about (a) the role of oral language on emergent literacy (cf. Sulzby, 1986; Teale, 1986), (b) success or

failure during early schooling experiences (cf. Heath, 1982; Michaels, 1981), (c) secondary students as they read content area materials (cf. Alvermann & Hayes, 1989), and (d) the influence on reading comprehension (Sticht & James, 1984), further research exploring this relationship as students in upper elementary grades construct meaning from text is needed.

The current research was designed as a case of five students. To build a more complete picture of how the relationship established among the members of this group represents that of other elementary students in general, replications with variations exploring students' oral and written discourse in situations including changes of texts (e.g., other genres or self-selected), contexts (e.g., required vs. optional reading), age levels, reading abilities, and so forth are needed.

Another question raised by this study is, What changes might result if the teacher implemented a more balanced reading program? Supporters of literature response argue that adopting an efferent stance with literary art hampers the reading experience. At the same time, young readers need support and instruction on skills and strategies if they are to improve their reading ability. This study suggests that such positions that dichotomize the reading experience may actually be misleading. Rather than establishing an "either or" situation, the question might be how to combine the two stances. In this study, when students focused on one or the other, the dominant school genre seemed to supersede important instructional issues of how to balance these two extremes. If the classroom teacher did plan a literature-based reading program with reading skills and strategies interspersed with personal response, how might children then respond? What role might Book Clubs play in such a setting? Perhaps such small student-led groups might be used only when the teacher encouraged personal response. Perhaps other groupings might better facilitate student proficiency of reading skills and strategies.

Another issue raised by this study relates to the selection of books. For this study, all the children read the same books. How would students interact with self-selected books? How might their interactions have changed if they had selected the books and met in groups according to the book read? Researchers have found that children react differently to books they have

chosen (Purves & Beach, 1972; Sims, 1983). Such reactions would probably alter group interactions, but how would such self-selected books fit into a reading program?

Clearly, several issues remain for future work. Since the movement for literature-based reading instruction is relatively new, we have much to learn about how to effectively implement this in classrooms.

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Appendix A

Explaination of Transcript Notations

1 4	Number notation at far left indicates a new speaker.
0 1	Number notation in second column indicates counter number on the transcription machine.
/ / /	Indicates pauses within a speakers turn. Each note (/) indicates one second.
[	Indicates overlapping talk.
. . .	Indicates a speaker's thoughts were interrupted by talk, but the other speaker might have begun during a slight pause in the first speaker's turn.
_	Indicates the speaker stressed this word. For example, "I want you to do that <u>now</u>!"
( )	Indicates my comments, including my interpretation of how someone stated something, or what other group members were doing at the same time.
" "	Indicates the speaker was reading from a log or book.
,	Indicates slight pauses in speech.
(?)	Indicates the speaker said something that was indistinguishable on the tape.